TL107

East Timor, Won't Go Away !

"When in 1989, I wrote a letter to the United Nations asking for a referendum, all newspapers from Djakarta, from here they criticized me in fact they were prepared to kill me."

"They are are prepared to kill me...the Indonesian administration and those who work with them."

Bishop Belo, early november 1991

Indonesia claims that the massacre was caused by "Portugal, delinquents and foreign journalists." However, Some say the November 12 massacre was a result of the 16 year occupation of East Timor by Indonesia. But when the Portuguese Parliamentary Mission (due to arrive in Timor at the beginning of November) was postponed, the feeling between Timorese and Indonesians approached boiling point.

Was the Indonesian Army really defending themselves from 'agitators' who threw a hand grenade at the Indonesian Army, (which didn't go off) ? The events in the 15 days before that fateful day, November the 12th paint a grim picture.

October the 28th, just after Midnight approximately fifty youths, who were either paid or forced by the military, started throwing stones at the Motael Church in Dili. Thirty young people were taking refuge in the church from the military.

After one and a half hours of stone throwing and abuse, several youths from inside the church came out and suggested to those throwing that it was unnecessary to persist. A physical fight started and the military who had been waiting behind trees came out. Two more trucks of military arrived. The church bells were ringing frantically but those people who tried to approach were stopped at road blocks and in many instances beaten.

Arrests started, 31 from inside the church were detained. One man Sebastiao Gomez Rangel tried to run. he was shot in the back with at least 3 bullets from an M16 automatic rifle. Two others were shot and seriously injured, one other died later in hospital. In a fit of revenge, an intelligence officer Alfonso Enriques was stabbed to death. he had a walkie talkie on his belt at the time of his death.

All those detained in this incident were tortured. A senior Catholic worker saw torture wounds from electric shocks, burns from cigarette butts, razor blade slashes and snake bites, on 11 of the young men.

On this same day, the Indonesian campaign of threats was exemplified. Three schools were called together by the Bupati (Senior local administrator) of Dili. They were told that any one who spoke with the

Portuguese Parliamentarians or approached them "would end up in Tacitolo." Tacitolo is one of the most feared execution sites used since the invasion by Indonesian death squads and soldiers to exterminate Timorese.

Ten days before the massacre, Mr. Laloreng, leader of the Clandestine Resistance in Dili, said that he believed that was "no doubt" that Indonesian Military was prepared to commit another massacre. "Here in Dili, they are preparing 7 (seven) burial pits in order to bury the ones arrested," he added.

The following afternoon, there was a memorial service at the Motael Church. After the service more than two thousand people walked in a funeral procession to the Santa Cruz cemetery. Upon arrival the numbers swelled to between four and six thousand. Not a single military officer was present on the procession or at the cemetery.

People were shouting "viva Sebastiao", "viva independence", "viva Xanana" but on this occasion it seems there was not the 'provocation' that the Indonesian military claims was responsible for the November 12 massacre. Again the following Tuesday on the 5th of November there was a memorial gathering at the Santa Cruz Cemetery with several hundred people present. at this time the Portuguese Parliamentary Mission was still possibly visiting East Timor.

Two days later, confirmation that the planned Portuguese visit was off filtered through. 3 o'clock in the afternoon and in my siesta dreams I became aware of a loud and ominous noise. A show of strength by ABRI (the Indonesian Armed Forces) was taking place. Unprecedented in the past two years, three battalions (almost 3,000 men) were running in military formation through the streets of Dili.

Each Platoon (100 men) was accompanied by a red beret or other senior ranking military officer. They wore no shirts, only pants, boots, riot sticks and many platoons were carrying M16's above their heads. The noise of boot on tarmac was intense. Coupled with singing of Javanese war songs, the air was thick with intimidation.

As they ran through the centre of town, People looked on with fear and nervousness. "where are you from?", "What are you doing here?", "Where are you staying?", were just some of the constant questions being fired by numerous Intelligence Agents, that day and all day every day.

Thousands of East Timorese youth were on the run at the time leading up to the Portuguese Parliamentary mission. As secret meetings took place, banners were painted and hidden, people were taking enormous risks. Hundreds left their jobs and university from other parts of Indonesia, in preparation for the Parliamentary visit, which they considered to be the closest step to Independance since 1975.

The Timorese were left abandoned and vulnerable as many were hoping to put their names on a list agreed to by Indonesia and Portugal. The list would guarantee protection by the United Nations after Portuguese Parliamentarians left East Timor.

On the 15th of November, a senior representative from the Catholic Church in Dili, (who wishes to remain nameless for safety reasons), informed me that 214 people had died directly resulting from the shooting at the Santa Cruz Cemetery on the 12th of November. At that stage more than 100 people were still seriously wounded in hospital and more than 200 seriously wounded people were not in hospital. The large number of injured people who were not in hospital had chosen to not go there in fear of their lives. The Church had come to this figure through contact with the families concerned.

I spoke with 8 people, Westerners and East Timorese, who witnessed both the demonstation and massacre at the Santa Cruz Cemetery.

Indonesian Military has claimed that the reason for the shooting at the Santa Cruz Cemetery was a retaliation to an alleged incident where an Indonesian Major was stabbed.

Those present at the demonstration, both Westerners and East Timorese, did not see a stabbing incident take place. The incident was said to have taken place in the middle of the demonstration in one of the busiest streets of Dili. The only civillian person who has seen the alleged Major is the wife of Governor, Mario Carrascalao, who has refused to talk with media about what she saw.

One East Timorese person said there might have been a stabbing, in front of the Merpati office in the centre of Dili. Two East Timorese said they were aware of a commotion at one stage but that it involved military throughing rocks at the demonstrators and that some rocks may have been thrown back towards the military officers. The 5 others said they were not aware of any such disturbance. All 8 were placed in different positions along the route of the march.

At the cemetery on Tuesday, the 12th of November, an East Timorese eye witness said he saw 6 trucks full of dead bodies, each containing between 30 and 40 people, leave the cemetery. Elderly women and children who had been in the Cemetery prior to the funderal procession arriving were amongst those killed.

An East Timorese witness also saw military entering houses in the vicinity of the Cemetery, accusing the occupants of hiding people and shooting entire families dead. It appears that the shooting outside the cemetery took place in houses to the East and South, up to 500 metres

from the cemetery. Shooting was heard in Dili on the 12th until 4 p.m. that afternoon.

I spoke with people who witnessed people being taken away during both the day and night. Their where-abouts are still unknown. Many of those such as the 32 young people taken away at the Motael Church incident on the 28th of October 1991, were interrogated and tortured. Some dissappear permanently.

According to the East Timorese Church worker mentioned above, the dissappearances of people at night has been a regular feature of life in East Timor since 1975. In the last month, families have reported their relations missing with the Indonesian military taking the person away during the day and night on an increasing basis. Hundreds of people have dissappeared in this way.

The disappearances of East Timorese people by the Indonesian military have also taken place outside Dili. Disappearances have been reported in the Town of Baucau, more than 25 prior to the massacre and more than 40 following the massacre.

In Ainaro, up to 75 people went missing acording to a different Church worker and two East Timorese in the days following the massacre on the 12th of November.

Los Palos at the Eastern end of East Timor is another location of alleged disappearances with the figure ensuing the Dili massacre at 18.

Mr Laloreng, the leader of the East Timorese Clandestine movement in the Dili region, said "there are 60 battalions of Indonesian military, paid informers and intelligence" in East Timor. Other estimates from people in the resistance in East Timor indicate a military presence of between 40,000 and 100,000 Indonesian troops present in the country.

The military and Government in Indonesia are very closely linked. Many Government officials were previously in the military forces. The Indonesian President General Suharto was Commander of the Indonesian armed forces before he became President in 1965.

In the early 60's, Indonesian military were trained in the United States at Fort Brag, Nebraska. The United States program of counter insurgency used during the Vietnam war became a dominant ideological force amongst the Indonesian military. These men now hold important positions in the Indonesian Government and Military forces.

The United States program focussed on de-humanising the 'enemy', for instance labelling them as PKI (Indonesian Communist Party) in 1965 or the GPK (Security Disturbing Movement in the past few years). This

allowed the military to kill without remorse while the Indonesian people had to prove they are not linked with any anti- Government activities.

In 1965 and 1966 up to 1,000,000 people are said to have died in Indonesia from the war aimed at obliterating the PKI. In East Timor, more than 200,000 people have died first as 'Fretilin Communists', and now as GPK.

Judge Djaelani, leader of the Indonesian investigative team on the November 12 Dili massacre, is a past military commander. Judge Djaelani used to be the Commander of the Kopassus, para commando regiment (red berets), especially trained in counter insurgency techniques.

After the massacre, I travelled a distance of 160 Kilometres and 16 military check points decorated the roads.

"Everyone off the bus/truck." shouted an invariably hardened Jawanese soldier. Indonesian citizens (as well as East Timorese) had their compulsory identification cards ready. If not, as was the case several times, the cardless East Timorese person was marched off by the military police. "All bags on the road". Emptying everything out of the bags became habit. Plain clothes officers gave the orders just as at the Dili massacre.

On one occasion an East Timorese man was told he didn't have the correct Identification card. After several minutes of interrogation by 8 military officers, one officer ordered the man to do jump squats like a frog as a punishment. As the East Timorese man started, he asked "how many?" "300" the overweight Jawanese military officer said sniggering.

After 14 'jump-squats' and sounds of protest coming from a bus full of East Timorese and a couple of tourists, the punishment ended and the man was allowed back on.

Most distressing was not having a body search or my bags checked but seeing the fear in the eyes of the Timorese civilians. Was this their last hour ? Equally disturbing was the expressionless face of Timorese soldiers, undoubtedly placed time and time again in the front line. Forced to kill his own people.

Ainaro was the most tense town outside of Dili. Stringent check points on the road entering and leaving the town indicated a battle zone. Every house displayed an Indonesian flag outside. If not the house hold members are taken away as "enemy", some tortured and others killed.

In East Timor, the resistance to Indonesian rule is as evident as the military presence, particularly if one talks to East Timorese people, out of Indonesian earshot. Non violent resistance has played a role for 16 years. Timorese students are forced to sing the Indonesian national anthem, although many students through out East Timor refuse.

Just one week before the massacre, in Baucau, 120 kilometres West from Dili, a class of young men refused to sing. One of the teachers as punishment proceeded to kick the boys who were in line, one by one. The class captain walked away as the teacher approached resulting in three teachers (none of whom are Timorese) tackling the boy. Some of the other boys came to his assistance and a small brawl followed.

One of the teachers rang the military police but the police upon arrival were met with the mediating position of a priest. Several students were taken to the military-police command for intense interrogation although all were released after a few hours. This I was assured by several East Timorese people, was not an isolated incident.

Bishop Belo believes the conflict in East Timor can be solved.
"We must maybe speak to both sides, through dialogue" including, "Every party, the Portuguese, the Fretilin, the Timorese who are still under Indonesia now, it's possible also the church, we are ready also to participate."

"We must seek for peace, and the freedom and the respect for Human Rights and let the people walk freely to the rice fields and let them be Timorese."

"So it is also necessary, to convince them(Indonesia) that only in one peaceful situation, it is not necessary to maintain here many, many battalions, many, many soldiers. If they may still maintain here many, many battalions it means that it is not peaceful, yeah according to the Indonesian language 'aman' is safe."

31 languages are still spoken in East Timor other than Tetun, the language spoken by almost all Timorese. Many aspects of East Timorese culture are still alive and strong. Much of the culture is based on the people's traditional land and subsistence lifestyles, so as the Indonesians displace more East Timorese from their land, cultural genocide prevails. The will of a vast majority of East Timorese people seems to favour an act of self determination and ultimately independence.

Robert Dekker.(pen name)

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